



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

VOLUME V
NUMBER I

JANUARY, 1897

WHOLE
NUMBER 41

SPECIALIZATION OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A SECONDARY teacher's work is specialized when he devotes his time to a single subject or natural group of subjects. As laid out by the Committee of Ten there are six departments in the secondary schools, viz.: ancient language, modern language, English, history, mathematics, natural science. It is obvious that these subjects may be split into others as, *e. g.*, ancient language into Latin and Greek, science into physics, chemistry, botany, etc. Or, on the other hand, the most closely related subjects may be united, as, *e. g.*, ancient and modern language, science and mathematics, history and English. It is clear then that specialization is a relative term—it may be somewhat loose or it may be very close. In all cases, however, its purpose is the same, and that purpose the same that it is in medicine, trade, or manufacture, viz., by confining the attention to a comparatively few related things to know and use those things more thoroughly than would be possible with many unrelated things.

The specialist who is teaching one subject in the high school is likely to know the facts of that subject more thoroughly than the man who teaches three; he will have at the same time more leisure for recreation, reading and the general interests of the school. But the advantages of specialization by no means stop there. Thorough knowledge of a subject begets enthusiasm in its pursuit and this enthusiasm is likely to infect the pupils who come in contact with it. Thorough knowledge, too, commands

the respect and admiration of the pupils, the principal, colleagues, and the public outside the school. I remember distinctly the impression made upon me as a young teacher by a colleague whom I found analyzing drinking water in his laboratory for a townsman who paid him for his skill and knowledge. A specialist in English often conducts a literary society or a Chautauqua circle, a specialist in history is a tower of strength in a local historical society, and I have known a specialist in botany to gain great repute by his greenhouse in which he cultivated the plants for analysis in his own classes. Is it not clear that a man who can give enough time to a subject to make his knowledge of it broad, sure and usable will gain not only deep and abiding satisfaction for himself but also confidence in the community for his school and secondary education in general? Quite as gratifying will be the enhanced respect of college officers who find intelligent and broadening scholarship in the preparatory schools. The case of specialization may be put more strongly. Liberal expenditure of time is *necessary*, I will not say to know the *literature* of a high school department, but to know enough of the *text-book* literature of the department to make a justifiable choice of books for class-room use. Large amounts of the people's money have been wasted for unusable books which have been put into the schools only to be thrown out in two or three years. Such experiences necessarily and naturally weaken the confidence of school committeemen in the teachers.

In my hearing within a few months at a great gathering of classical teachers, a speaker criticised school editions of classical authors for the lack of three features which he stated. As a matter of fact all three features have been contained in certain text-books of prominent firms for years. To add to the necessity above outlined, the high school text-book literature in these days is voluminous and of very unequal merit. To refer to my own department, I have on my desk now waiting for examination Comstock's Virgil, Greenough's new Cicero, Bennett's Latin Composition, Barss' Cornelius Nepos and Humphrey's Quintus Curtius—all of them published within a

few months, and all worthy of examination by every secondary Latin teacher. Before adopting a book for a class it should be examined in detail and such questions as these should be asked: Is it correct? Is it interesting? Is it too difficult? Does it show sense and sympathy? Does it supplement or clog the teacher? And, most important of all, is it adapted to me and my class? Many books are good but are not good for me and my class.

The presence of trained specialists in high schools would help to do away with incomplete, brief, sketchy courses, too slight to be useful or to absorb the interest. When teachers have three or four subjects to cover they can do little more than expound the text-book, and do not feel the limitation of so doing, but when they are full of their one subject they are constantly demanding and filling a large place for it in the school curriculum.

Some principals claim that the teaching of several subjects at once and the transfer of teachers from one subject to another make these teachers broad, versatile and flexible. There may be something in this, but is not the breadth sometimes attained at the expense of depth, and the flexibility at the expense of power? Moreover, every department in our high schools is broad, and a teacher may keep himself out of the ruts by specializing in different lines in different years. To illustrate from my own department, a teacher's energy in one year might be most largely given to grammar, in another to translation, in another to Roman history, in another to Cicero, in another to Virgil, while the increasing flexibility of college requirements and the large number of new authors being edited makes it possible to read new Latin every year.

The specialization of studies in high schools is, at least to some extent, practicable. Suppose that a small high school of three teachers is organized to teach the Latin scientific group of the Committee of Ten. Obviously with six subjects each teacher must take more than one. The foreign languages, Latin and German, naturally go together, giving a teacher twenty-nine recitations per week, mathematics and science (mutually helpful and naturally allied) make a broad department and give a teacher

twenty-nine recitations per week. English and history are often combined, for the history of a country explains its literature and its literature its history. Historical reading, too, furnishes subjects for essay writing. These two subjects make twenty-two recitations per week—seven less than the other teachers, but this is right, for English requires a large amount of outside work in correcting compositions and in personal conference with students, and the history requires very wide reading. The science, with double periods for laboratory work, will require of the teacher assigned to it heavier work than that of the language teacher. Might not the difficulty be met by giving to the language teacher more of the clerical work of the school than to the science teacher? Such adjustments as I have just indicated consummated in a spirit of friendly accommodation would often prevent the overloading of a teacher with a third subject and a distasteful one at that. They would give to the teachers in a small school a professional feeling and an investigating spirit. There are of course hundreds of teachers in the high schools of the Northwest who are better able to specialize than the ones I have supposed. Many do not have more than twenty recitations per week and cover a far smaller territory than that indicated above. Instead of all sciences they have but one, instead of all languages but one. Indeed, in some of our larger high schools a process of over-specialization has been going on which seems to invite a word of warning. It is not wise, *e. g.*, to confine a teacher to beginning Latin as is done in some of the city high schools. If she does not know enough to teach Cæsar she certainly cannot teach beginning Latin well, and experience with Cæsar would soon open her eyes to some deficiencies in her first year preparation for that author. On the other hand, the teacher of Cæsar who shares part of the work with the beginners will sympathize more fully with the pupils' struggles during the first year, and understand better their difficulties when they come to the second year.

A teacher who has only twenty recitations a week in one department, like Latin or physics or history, should be enlar-

ging his view and increasing his knowledge and skill every year. His studies may lead him to increased practice along the precise lines of work that he is taking with his pupils so that he may become more facile in his mastery of simple things, or he may assimilate the ideas of others in wide reading, or he may to a certain extent make investigations in his department for himself. A specialist in Greek who is also burdened with the care of one of the very largest high schools in Michigan presented at the classical conference in Ann Arbor last year a study of the conjunction *πρίν* which involved the reading and re-reading of every page of the works of Xenophon. The greatest need for secondary Latin teachers at present, it seems to me, is greater practical mastery of the language itself in its simpler classical forms, including of course such knowledge of Roman history and life as will make the language thoroughly intelligible and interesting. To secure this mastery the teacher needs to read and write more Latin. To prepare such specialists it would seem that there should be many undergraduate and graduate courses in our universities in Latin composition, Roman life and the rapid reading of comparatively easy Augustan prose. Discredit has sometimes been brought upon graduate work by Ph.D.'s who possess little mastery of the common things in their department. A minute knowledge of the meters of Catullus will avail little in a high school to a teacher who uses *ut non* to express negative purpose and has too little knowledge of Roman history and constitution to explain the easier allusions in Cicero's speeches.

Two or three possible objections remain to be answered. The principal of one of the prominent academies of America charged not only with the instruction but with the moral well-being of boys away from home is quoted as saying that he finds it every year increasingly difficult to get teachers who will take any care of the boys outside the class room. Can it be that teachers become so absorbed in their specialties as to forget their duties as teachers of human beings? There is need of a word of warning here. It may be said, however, that the limitation of a teacher's work to one department, by making

time out of the class room less crowded ought to give him more time for his duties to individual students and to the general welfare of the school as a whole.

Again some specialists become so absorbed in their specialties as to undervalue other departments, and even to exhibit before their pupils gross deficiencies in mental equipment and training. Perhaps the most common and trying of these deficiencies is in the use of the mother tongue. The remedy for this evil is largely with the colleges and universities. A young man has been telling me today of a technical school in which pupils are permitted to slight English and German nominally required in order to get more time for science and mathematics. A refusal to give the higher degrees to pupils deficient, *e. g.*, in English would seem to be justified. For the rest, public and school sentiment and the generally rising culture of our communities may be relied on to castigate the illiteracy of narrow specialists. I say narrow, for a broad specialist will see that a considerable basis of training in all departments is necessary to high and permanent achievement in his own. It is to be hoped that the old idea of liberal education will survive in our colleges and that city examinations for teachers' positions will still insist upon a reasonable knowledge of all departments of secondary education, while leaving to the candidate the choice of a more minute and searching examination in some one department. I retain a distinct impression of the advantage to me of reviewing geometry for such an examination some years ago.

To a certain type of mind delving is impossible, and principals tell us that some of their teachers, assigned to a particular department, prepare themselves only so far as to save themselves from confusion of face before their classes, using the extra time afforded by the department assignment for matters quite extraneous to school interests. The difficulty here is with the individual and not with the department system. It should be met by transferring the teacher to a more elementary school. Many of these persons are admirably bright and sympathetic and enjoy imparting knowledge.

I. B. BURGESS

MORGAN PARK, ILL.